

Our Adult Children - Keep Your Mouth Shut And The Welcome Mat Out

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July 28, 2022



Coach Myrna--July 27, 2022

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Our Adult Children

A young man asked an older, wiser man, "What will it take to become wise, and responsible, and satisfied in life?" The older man, (who was wise, and responsible, and satisfied) smiled and said, "Two words: good decisions." "But how do I learn to make good decisions?" the young man asked. The older man said, "One word: experience." The young man pressed for details. "But how do I gain experience?" The older man replied, "Two words: bad decisions."

This story is paraphrased from one that I read in ***Doing Life With Your Adult Children--Keep Your Mouth Shut & The Welcome Mat Out***, by Jim Burns. I recommend this book for all parents who have adult children or those approaching adulthood.

Parenting our children as they become young adults can be tricky. For the first 18 to 20 years of our child's life, our job is to love, teach and guide them. At times, we have given them unsolicited advice or even overrode their choices.

Then comes the day when they are all grown up, ready to move out and live on their own. At this point, we must loosen our grip and begin a new level of relationship with them as young adults. If you are like me, this is not easy.

Many of us have a tough time letting go of control. It is not that we butt in because we think they are incapable; it is because we are concerned about our child's welfare and think we are helping by sharing our experiences. The reality is that our concern often does not come across in this way. Our adult children feel like we are still treating them as children, and it expresses a lack of trust in their ability to navigate their lives. After all our loving and guiding, we need to let them make their own mistakes and learn from them as a necessary part of their ongoing growth process.

As the story above indicates, we need to trust that experience is often a better teacher than the advice that we want to share. When we find ourselves tempted to give unsolicited advice, may I suggest that we stop and ask ourselves, "Does this really matter in the long run?" Remembering that our long-term goal is having a healthy and loving relationship with our adult children can help us avoid conflicts.

With adult children, we need to understand that our role has shifted from a hands-on parent to being a mentor and a coach. All of us need the affirmation and encouragement that a mentor or coach provides. They do not push their own agenda or give lectures. Rather, by asking guiding questions and engaging in conversations, they offer support and understanding. I would like to leave you with this list from Jim Burn's book on how to tell the difference between a lecture and a conversation.

You are giving a lecture when:

- You do most of the talking
- Your voice is raised
- You sound a little preachy
- You sound like you are speaking to a child
- Your statements make you sound superior

You know you are having a conversation when:

- You are listening to and reflecting on what the other person says
- You engage in a dialogue
- Your tone and demeanor show respect
- Your language is free from "you should" statements
- You have been given permission to speak into the other person's life

To purchase my book on Amazon, click here:

tinyurl.com/7-Gifts-to-Give-Your-Child

If you would like to know more about what I offer as a coach, please visit my website: www.coachmyrna.org/ Find out more about Safe Conversations www.coachmyrna.org/safe-conversations.html.

